

## VIRGINIA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING COUNCIL

### *Summary of Session Two Held on July 11, 2005*

#### **Introduction**

Rob Dugger opened the second session of the Early Childhood Learning Council by welcoming participants and asking members to introduce themselves. Paul Hirschbiel then reviewed the goals for the second session, which included the following:

- ❑ To present statistical information on the needs of Virginia's children;
- ❑ To identify resources and services currently available to meet those needs;
- ❑ To identify remaining gaps and priorities to be addressed;
- ❑ To explore the relationship of policies to improving services for children; *and*
- ❑ To consider preliminary recommendations for improving integration of existing services and possible additional services needed.

#### **Review of recommendations emerging from Session One**

Dean Clifford reminded the council of the two-pronged nature of these sessions: to provide a variety of essential information to participants and to actively involve the council in responding to this information by making recommendations for changes in policies and/or services for children and their families in Virginia. She then reviewed the recommendations emerging from the first session:

- ❑ **Vision**
  - All children will develop their full potential, prepared for lifelong success.
  - The well-being of young children will be a state priority.
  - Virginia will develop a culture of providing opportunities for children to learn, a "learning ecology."
  - All children will enter school healthy.
  - Families and educators will hold high expectations for children.
  - Children will be confident in their abilities, will have respect for self and others, and will be encouraged to develop their creativity.
  - Programs will be inclusive, available to and effective for all children.
- ❑ **Focus of work:** Virginia will maximize all sources of funding for services to children (local, state, and federal) and will successfully coordinate the provision of services.
- ❑ **Top priorities in creating a system of services for young children**, including attention to services for parents, high quality early education programs, health services, public awareness, and accountability measures, as shown below:
  - The system of services will engage and educate parents, offering the support parents need in their role of providing care and education for their children.
  - The system of services will include *all* children, with a particular emphasis on the first 33 months of life.
  - All children will have access to high quality early childhood education and families will have a choice of excellent programs from which to choose.
  - Early childhood educational programs will meet uniform curriculum standards, in order to measure success and ensure kindergarten readiness.
  - All children will have access to health care.
  - There will be an effective public awareness effort to build public will in support of early childhood work.
  - There will be identified performance measures to ensure accountability of the systems work.

❑ **Indicators of success/results to be measured**

- There will be a zero waiting list for quality child care.
- Parents will be actively engaged.
- There will be an improvement in measurements of school readiness.
- Third grade test scores will improve.
- More businesses will have policies and practices which are family and child-care friendly.
- The financial and family impacts of the programs will be measured.
- *Over the long haul:* There will be a reduction in school drop out figures, in the numbers of people being incarcerated, and in the cost of treatment/intervention services.

By way of continuing to guide the Council in terms of possible types of recommendations that could be offered, the facilitator also reviewed a summary of the types of recommendations being offered by similar task forces in other states, falling in such categories as

- ❑ Changes in or additions to policy
- ❑ Changes in or additions to service delivery
- ❑ Public engagement
- ❑ Identification of outcomes to be measured
- ❑ Changes in governance and oversight
- ❑ Changes in funding: maximizing, blending, and increasing.

(Council members received a complete copy of the recommendations offered by a task force in Oklahoma and another task force working for the National Governor's Association, as well as recommendations from the Business Roundtable.)

**The State of Virginia's Children**

Kathy Glazer then provided an overview of where Virginia's young children learn and develop, including information related to a variety of settings. Some of the highlights of this presentation included the following:

- ❑ In Virginia, there are approximately ½ million children aged birth to five.
- ❑ Regardless of the setting in which children spend their time, **quality matters**, as defined by such matters as
  - Relationships are characterized by trust and consistency.
  - The environment provides safe and encouraged exploration and is one in which social, emotional, and physical needs are met.
  - Adults understand the developmental needs of children.
  - Adults have an educational level that allows for language-rich interaction.
- ❑ There are **resources available to help parents provide such an environment at home**, including
  - Home visiting programs, such as CHIP, Healthy Families, Resource Mothers
  - New Parent kit and telephone help lines
  - Pediatricians and health professionals
  - Libraries
  - Internet resources
- ❑ Many parents and families face extraordinary **challenges**, as evidenced by such statistics as
  - 31% of births in Virginia are to single mothers.
  - 17 of 1000 births are to mothers aged 15-17.
  - Approximately 13% of children in VA live in poverty.
  - 62% of children under six live in a homes in which all parents are working—about 330,000 children in this age group. 68% of Virginia's women (253,000) and 85% of men (241,000) with children under age 6 are employed.

- ❑ Approximately 65% of Virginia’s young children are in some form of **care and/or early education outside the home**, including the following:
  - Licensed child care centers, with a capacity of 235,432
  - Regulated Family Day Homes, with a capacity of 19,232
  - Religious institutions exempt from licensure, with a capacity of 71,024
  - Unregulated Family Child Care Homes and/or Nanny care, with an unknown capacity.
  - Head Start, serving approximately 13,000 low-income children 3-5 years old, and including early childhood education and a number of wrap-around services
  - Early Head Start, serving approximately 1,000 low-income children from birth to three.
  - Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), providing a quality preschool education for 4-year old children at risk for school failure and not served by Head Start, reaching about 15,000 children in 2004-05.
  - Title I Preschool classes, offered through Title I-funded schools and serving about 5,500 children educationally at risk
- ❑ **Revenue sources** for early childhood education include
  - **Parent fees**, approximately 60% of the total
  - **Business and philanthropy**, about 1% of the total
  - **Government**, about 39%, including
    - **Federal and local blend:**
      - Head Start, \$100 million
      - Title I, \$19 million
    - **Federal, state, and local blend through CCDF:**
      - Child care subsidies: \$122 million, serving 58,000 children
      - Training: \$500,000 for training and \$1.5 million for provider scholarships for degree programs
      - Quality initiatives: \$.5 million for providing child care for children with special needs and \$350,000 for Virginia’s Child Care Resource and Referral network.
    - **State and local blend for VPI:** \$47 million
- ❑ Currently, in response to a Maternal and Child Health grant, there is a Comprehensive Systems Planning process underway in Virginia. It is hoped that the work of this Early Learning Council can be coordinated with this planning process, providing high-level visibility and additional depth for recommendations emerging from both sources.

### **Panel Discussion**

Following Kathy’s presentation, a panel provided additional information and responding to vigorous questioning from the Council. The panel included the following:

- ❑ Bethany Geldmaker, Ph.D., VA Department of Health
- ❑ Linda Poorbaugh, VA Department of Education
- ❑ Carolynne Stevens, Division of Licensing Programs, VA DSS
- ❑ Dottie G. Wells, Child Care and Development Division, VA DSS

The chart on the following page summarizes some of their comments.

PROGRAM	STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES/GAPS
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provides comprehensive services to at-risk 3-4 year olds (and, if Early Head Start is added, to 0-3 children)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Federal budget</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Extended history of services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Training resources for staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Funding flows from federal to local level, with little state oversight or coordination</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Overlap/insufficient coordination with VPI</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Only reaches income-eligible children</li> </ul>
Virginia Preschool Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local control</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Calls for degreed teachers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reaching increased numbers of at-risk children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local variations in definition of at-risk</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local variations in length of day</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of statewide curriculum</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Need to build capacity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty in finding qualified preschool teachers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient coordination with Head Start</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Many families are not eligible for program</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local match required; some systems not yet participating</li> </ul>
Child Development Block Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Virginia is meeting required federal match, maximizing funding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provides child-care assistance for low-income working families</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has some set-aside funds for quality improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Many families do not qualify for assistance; cost of a year of child care is greater than cost of a year of college in public university</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Licensing code is convoluted, complex</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neither funding nor licensing assure quality</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Great concern: insufficient supply of high quality infant and toddler care</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Waiting lists</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not reaching all children in foster care</li> </ul>
Additional general comments: concerns across the board		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Quality</b>, both in terms of program standards and staff preparation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Need for plan that ensures smooth transition between early years and K-12</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Need to address behavioral issues for many children</b>, provide training for ece staff and parents</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lack of parental and public awareness of importance of/nature of high quality ece</b></li> </ul>

Emerging from the panel discussion were a number of potential recommendations, including these:

- ❑ **Coordinate all early childhood education services**, developing program standards which are aligned with K-12 education; assuring the availability of broad-based services as needed; and linking home, health, and early childhood education services.
- ❑ **Emphasize and assure quality in early childhood care and education**, attending to such areas as
  - Improvements in licensing codes and requirements
  - High program standards
  - Workforce improvements, leading to a well-educated, well-compensated staff
  - Plans ensuring a smooth transition from the early years (both at home and out-of-home) into kindergarten
  - A well-developed plan to expand the supply of high quality care for infants and toddlers
  - Training and support to ensure attention to behavioral and emotional issues in children
- ❑ **Integrate the funding streams to maximize efficiency and economies of scale.**
- ❑ **Expand child care assistance available to parents not eligible for child care subsidies, Head Start, and VPI.**
- ❑ **Launch a vigorous public awareness campaign**, including
  - Parental education as to the developmental needs of children, appropriate parental responses, and the nature and importance of high quality care and education during the early years;
  - A broad-based campaign which builds public will to increase support during the early years;
  - Information designed to increase business involvement in and support of early care and education and other policies/practices supportive of healthy family life.

### **Policy Matters**

The next presentation was by Kristie Kauerz, from the Policy Matters Project, based at Columbia University. Kristie first addressed the purpose of the project as follows:

- ❑ Address the field-based gap between visions of an early care and education/early childhood system and the realities of fragmented policies;
- ❑ Convert long-term planning into concrete policy decisions.

She emphasized the fact that public policies are important for the following reasons:

- ❑ “Policy encourages coherent, sensible and relevant program and service development;
- ❑ Policy integrates and aligns the public’s expectations for how programs and people work together;
- ❑ Policy shapes the institutions that implement and enforce subsequent policy decisions;
- ❑ State policy allows flexibility to define the characteristics of the (state’s) own early childhood system.”

Through this project, Columbia University has worked with three states to

- ❑ Conduct an audit of current policies relevant to services for children, examining policies related to
  - Quality ECE settings
  - Professional and workforce development
  - Informed families, informed public
  - Accountability/results orientation
  - Finance
  - Governance and coordination
  - Governance and coordination

- Education in the early grades
- Health, mental health, and oral health

*Note: The graphs showing the results of these three audits indicate both the variety in policy development across states and the need for improvements in all three states!*

- ❑ Examine the political and policy context in each state
- ❑ Recommend steps leading to short-term, system-relevant policy change.

Animated questions and discussion following the presentation indicated a possible interest in such an approach in Virginia.

By way of example, Dean Clifford then briefly summarized North Carolina's use of policy changes in child care licensing to improve the quality of care available for children. The introduction of a 5-tiered license for child care provided a tool for measuring changes in quality, a channel for public awareness about quality, and incentives for child care providers to address quality issues. The system measured three components: program quality, as measured by Environment Rating Scales; Director and Teacher education levels, with a new minimum requirement for lead teachers (Early Childhood Child Care Credential) and points for additional levels of education; and compliance history (health and safety regulations.) Success in implementing the system required a number of things:

- ❑ Incentives for moving up the star-rated license, provided both through differential subsidy reimbursements and a variety of Smart Start supports;
- ❑ Steps to ensure that the Community College system was prepared to handle the demand for increased early childhood education courses;
- ❑ A multi-layered process of building support for the new system;
- ❑ Improved database capacity to trace workforce education and capture star-rating information;
- ❑ Outsourcing Environment Rating Scale assessments;
- ❑ A variety of support and technical assistance for early childhood programs;
- ❑ A public campaign to build awareness about the new system.

### **Small group work**

For the last hour of the day, the Council split into two groups to discuss a number of questions designed to continue the gradual movement toward final recommendations from the Council. The results are summarized as follows:

#### **Group One** *(Thanks to Rob Dugger and Kristie Kauerz for supplying these notes.)*

- ❑ *Having heard today's information, what do you see as the top priorities that need to be addressed in Virginia?*
  - Conduct a policy audit, in order to have the data necessary to convince the legislature of the need for change.
  - Establish a clear vision for the early childhood system in Virginia.
  - Identify and quantify "quality" in early childhood education., in order to be able to measure and report on changes in quality. Raise the bar for early childhood education. Develop standards of learning for early childhood education/child care, including guidelines for what young children should know and be able to do prior to school entrance. Align early childhood curriculum standards with what is needed in all five domain areas of school readiness. Provide strategies and incentives for mediocre programs to improve.
  - Establish benchmarks for the early childhood system in Virginia and develop the capacity to collect data on changes in the system.
- ❑ *What recommendations would you offer for improving the integration of early childhood services and/or adding services for children and families?*

- Parent education and outreach, raising both the awareness and basic knowledge among parents. This should be led by a public-private partnership.
  - Active efforts to ensure gubernatorial support.
  - Soliciting matching funds from the private sector.
  - Provide incentives to providers for quality improvement.
- ❑ *What recommendations might you offer to ensure adequate involvement by parents and/or services for parents?*
- Improve and expand the use of the Resource and Referral Network to educate parents.
  - Implement effective Public Service Announcements on TV and Radio.
  - Educate the business community and provide incentives for them to invest in ECE.
  - Involve Human Resource Departments in disseminating information.
- ❑ *What strategies might you recommend for encouraging legislative action on such an agenda?*  
Most important: enable parents to understand and advocate for what is better for their children.

**Group Two** (Thanks to Paul Hirschbiel for taking these notes.)

- ❑ *What appears to be most important to address in ensuring availability and access for Virginia's children to a system of high quality early childhood educational programs?*
- Obviously, the two key surface ingredients are a supply of high quality childcare programs and financial support to help all parents pay for this quality.
  - To obtain these ingredients it will take a broad consortium, public and private, working together over a period of many years (government, business, healthcare providers, parents, faith-based community, etc.).
- ❑ *What potential challenges do you see in establishing a system of services for young children in Virginia and how would you address these?*
- ❑ *What do you see as the role of each sector in creating such a system, and what strategies would you recommend for involving them?*

The ideas and issues started free-flowing from Group Two. (The list that follows does provide many of the answers to the second and third questions, but not in an ordered way.)

- 1) Government:
  - ❑ Structurally childcare in Virginia is handled by DSS and preschool is handled by DOE. These areas should be combined perhaps into one new Department of Early Care and Education as some states have done (we think).
  - ❑ In Virginia, 0-5 childcare is not defined as education; hence, commitment to equality by the Commonwealth does not exist as it does with K-12. Given the financial impact, to make this change politically at this time would be very difficult. However, we recommend that Virginia spend as much per child per year 0-5 as is spent K-12.
  - ❑ Generally, there needs to be a focus on 0-5 at the state level that heretofore has not existed.
- 2) Faith-Based Community: We need to start a dialogue early with the broadly defined faith-based community in Virginia. If on board, they can be a great channel to build public awareness and can provide substantial resources as well as facilities to the initiative. Alternatively, they can be a formidable obstacle.
- 3) Parents:
  - ❑ Parents need to be educated in what is quality and motivated to demand it

- ❑ Once again, there is an incorrect mind set that differentiates between education and childcare. We need to change this.
- 4) Business:
- ❑ We need to get the business community engaged because they can be the mouth-piece and provide the political clout for working families.
  - ❑ Businesses definitely see the short-term workforce implications.
  - ❑ Businesses have a more difficult time with the long-term workforce implications
  - ❑ We should encourage creative use of tax incentives to build more quality childcare centers in businesses
- 5) Health Care Providers:
- ❑ This sector gets involved in issues when it becomes a problem for them;
  - ❑ Health care providers were big partners in the Governor's Tool Kit for New Families
  - ❑ We need to add dental into the mix of services provided (plus adds another power group)
  - ❑ Health Care providers will get involved in this issue if asked, but we need to figure out the right way to ask.
- 6) K-12:
- ❑ K-12 lives in a no excuse environment; must take kids at whatever level they are and strive to move them forward.
  - ❑ The system (often) takes a child and excludes the parents.
  - ❑ Involvement by K-12 is a no-brainer as long as the initiative does not impact their funding stream
  - ❑ K-12 wants students better prepared to learn
- 7) Child Care Workers:
- ❑ Must increase the education and pay of childcare workers.
  - ❑ Must raise the desirability of a career in childcare
  - ❑ Must address burnout issues
- 8) Other Thoughts:
- ❑ Require the four-year-old program (However, that would be a political nightmare!)
  - ❑ We must determine programs that work now and visibly promote and fund these; competition for funds among programs will be intense.
  - ❑ To build the public will, the public will need a GREAT campaign
  - ❑ Does anyone note the connection between students who enter kindergarten behind and their younger siblings? Is this a way to focus some initial efforts?

### Next steps

As the meeting concluded, participants were asked to ensure that the next two meetings were on their calendars and to add a fifth date, in case an additional meeting becomes necessary. All meetings will be held **from noon to 4:00 pm, at the Virginia Department of Social Services**, on the following dates:

- ❑ **Session Three, August 15**
- ❑ **Session Four, September 12**
- ❑ **Session Five (if needed), October 3**